

sure young people today can grow up and know that if they choose, they can go to college and it is affordable.

I am especially delighted that S. 7, one of the top 10 priorities, addresses the issue of college affordability. It is very disheartening to me to walk into a middle school today and have seventh and eighth graders say to me: Why should I get good grades; I can't afford to go to college. That is not the message we should be sending. We should be sending the message to them that if they work hard and get good grades, they will go to college.

We have to address that issue in the Senate. We all know the jobs of the future depend on our young people today and whether they get the education they need, and the money should not be a barrier.

I know this issue. Money was not a barrier for me when I was growing up. My father was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis when I was in high school. There are seven kids in our family. We all thought the door had been shut to us and the ability to go to college. But not so because leaders in the Senate stood up before I ever knew about them and said we need to have Pell grants and student loans and we need to make college affordable.

So all seven kids in my family—despite the fact my dad could no longer work and was confined to a wheelchair, that my mom had to go on welfare, she had to go back to school herself and raise seven kids—we were able to go to college on Pell grants and student loans. All seven of us graduated and went on and one of us became a Senator.

We should not be shutting that door of hope to any young American today. No matter what happens to them personally, no matter what their circumstances, no matter what State, city or community they grow up in, we want them to know the United States of America and leaders in their country know it is important for them to get an education.

So as we move forward in this session of Congress, we are going to focus on college affordability and making sure that the backbone of our country is strong once again.

We have much work ahead of us. We do need to work together. Mr. President, 51 to 49 in the Senate is very close, but we know that the issues in this country are extremely important and the families in this country are counting on us.

I look forward to working with all of my colleagues to achieve an agenda that sends that promise of hope once again.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, first, I thank the Senator from Washington for a very eloquent and very profound statement. The message the Senator from Washington put forward on the Senate floor is one that all Americans

ought to hear. It is a message of hope and promise.

I thank the Senator from Washington for her leadership in so many areas but especially in the area about which she spoke so eloquently—the area of education. I had not known that about her family. It brings home once again that in the America we love, anything should be possible for any child. No child should be deprived of the hopes and dreams of having an education and succeeding in life simply because they were born poor or born on the wrong side of the tracks, so to speak, or maybe the wrong color—whatever. Every child ought to have that opportunity.

I thank the Senator for so eloquently putting it forward on the Senate floor.

STEM CELL RESEARCH

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I wish to pick up a little bit from Senator MURRAY's remarks and talk about S. 5, the stem cell bill, that was also introduced today by the majority leader, Senator REID.

Stem cell research, when it is stripped of all of the phony arguments and rhetoric, is basically about hope. It is hope for people with Lou Gehrig's disease. It is hope for people with spinal cord injuries, hope for kids suffering from juvenile diabetes, hope for people with Parkinson's disease.

In this Congress, we are going to bring those hopes one giant step closer to reality. At long last, hopefully, we will lift the President's restrictions on stem cell research and finally give our Nation's best scientists the tools they need to produce treatments and cures.

The bill we have introduced today, S. 5, the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2007, is the exact same bill that passed both Houses last year with strong bipartisan support. The House passed the bill 238 to 194. The Senate passed it 63 to 37.

Regrettably, the President chose to exercise his first and only veto of his administration in vetoing this bill. And with his veto, the President ignored the will of the American people, he ignored scores of Nobel laureates, he ignored top scientists at the National Institutes of Health, and with one stroke of his pen, he dashed the hopes of millions of Americans suffering from diseases that could one day be cured or treated through stem cell research.

But now we are back, it is a new Congress, and the voices of hope are stronger than ever. In November, the American people elected many new Members of Congress who support stem cell research and replaced many former Members of Congress who opposed this research. As a result, we will pass this bill again this year, and the margins of victory will be even wider.

Let me spend a moment reviewing what S. 5 would accomplish. More than 5 years ago, the President announced in a speech that federally funded scientists could conduct research only on

embryonic stem cell lines that were derived prior to 9 p.m. on August 9, 2001. The President gave his speech that evening, August 9, 2001. He said all of those stem cell lines derived before 9 p.m., that was OK, but if they were derived after 9 p.m., they could not be funded with Federal funds. I never understood that. Why was it 9 p.m.? Why wasn't it 9:15 p.m. or maybe 8:45, 9:13? Why was it 9 p.m.? At the beginning, one has to question the logic of why 9 p.m. was the time barrier.

When the President announced his policy, he said that 78 stem cell lines were eligible for research. We now know that is not so. Only 21 are eligible, not nearly enough to reflect the genetic diversity of this Nation.

What is more, every one of those lines, all 21 of those lines are contaminated with mouse cells. They were grown on mouse cells, so they are all contaminated. So none of them will ever be used for any kind of human treatment.

Meanwhile, hundreds of new stem cell lines have been derived since the President's arbitrary deadline. Many of these lines are uncontaminated, they are healthy, but they are totally off limits to federally funded scientists.

That is really a shame because if we are serious about realizing the promise of stem cell research, our scientists need access to the best stem cell lines possible. We need a stem cell policy that offers true and meaningful hope. That is what S. 5 would provide.

Under this bill, federally funded researchers could study any stem cell line, regardless of the date it was derived, as long as certain strong ethical guidelines are met. I point out, again, as I have in the past and I will continue to point out, that the ethical guidelines in S. 5 are stronger than the ethical guidelines under the existing policy.

What are those guidelines?

One, no money can be exchanged. No one can ever be paid for donating embryos.

Second, these embryos can only be used for stem cell research and for nothing else.

And third, the donors have to give informed consent for them to be used.

The final point is most important. The only way a stem cell line could be eligible for this federally funded research is if it were derived from an embryo that was otherwise going to be discarded. Let me, again, say what that means.

There are more than 400,000 embryos frozen in in vitro fertilization clinics all over the country—over 400,000. Right now, the only thing that can happen to those is that they be discarded. They are thrown away every day. Every day embryos are discarded in in vitro fertilization clinics all over America. The donors have no other choice.

Take friends of mine, a young couple. They couldn't have children. They finally went to an IVF clinic. That

didn't work. They went to another one. Now she is pregnant, and they are going to have twins. They may have one or two more children—I don't know—but there are going to be some of those embryos left over. Right now my friend's only choice is to have them discarded. That is her only choice. But as she said to me: I would love, after I have my children and my family, if there are embryos left over, I would love to be able to donate them for stem cell research to help cure disease and to help people who are sick.

Right now she cannot do that. Neither she nor her husband can do that. Our bill would allow them to have that option. No one is forced to do anything, but it would allow them to have that option.

I also, wish to point out again one of the misconceptions. These are embryos. They are blastocysts. They have about 100 cells. I always do this: I put a dot on a piece of paper, hold it up and say: Can anybody see that? That is what we are talking about. It is about the size of a period at the end of a sentence. There is a lot of misinformation about what we are talking about.

As I said before, Congress is going to pass this bill, that is certain. Sadly, some are already predicting the President will veto it for a second time. I hope they are wrong. I hope the President will respect the will of the people and sign the stem cell research bill. But if he does veto it, we will persist. We will use every legislative means at our disposal to make sure S. 5 is enacted into law, and it will happen during this Congress.

My nephew Kelly is one of the millions of Americans whose hopes depend on stem cell research. Kelly was in the Navy. He had a terrible accident on an aircraft carrier, and he has been basically a paraplegic now for 28 years. But he has kept his hopes alive that our scientists will be able to find a cure. Stem cell research offers the best hope for people suffering from spinal cord injuries.

Now is the time to give them the hope, to lift the ban on stem cell research. As I said, we will do that in this Congress. It will be one of the first bills we pass. I hope the President will sign it and we can move on. But if not, for Kelly and for so many millions of Americans, we hope the long wait is almost over. I predict that hope will prevail in this Congress.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

CESAR CHAVEZ

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President I will speak briefly. One of the things I am going to do today is join the distinguished Presiding Officer, Senator SALAZAR—in fact, I should note that this is the first time I have seen the distinguished Presiding Officer in the chair. He looks as though he was born to preside here, and he does it well. I

am going to join him in introducing a bill to include Cesar Chavez among the names of the great civil rights leaders we honored in the title of last year's Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 2006.

When we were considering this legislation in the Senate Judiciary Committee, Senator SALAZAR made a compelling argument why that name, an American hero's name, should be added to the bill: because he devoted and sacrificed his life to empower the most vulnerable in America, as did Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, and Coretta Scott King.

Cesar Chavez's name should be added to the law as an important recognition of the broad landscape of political inclusion made possible by the Voting Rights Act. This bill would not alter the act's vital remedies to address continuing discrimination in voting, but rather it is overdue recognition of the importance of the Voting Rights Act to Hispanic-Americans.

I offered Senator SALAZAR's amendment in the Judiciary Committee. The moral weight of what he wanted to do was so compelling that in a committee often fractured, it passed unanimously. It was included. It was not included in the final bill because as we were nearing the ending time, we did not want to have to have the bill go back and forth to the other body again because we wanted to get it on the President's desk in time. I committed to the distinguished Senator from Colorado that I would join him again this year, and I say with virtual certainty that the Senate Judiciary Committee will move very rapidly with that issue this year. I have the commitment of the new chairman backing that up, as does he have mine. And so I urge the Senate to quickly take up and pass this measure as we convene the new Congress and commit ourselves once again to ensuring that the great promises of the 14th and 15th Amendments are kept for all Americans.

COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM

Mr. President, as this new Congress begins, we have a tremendous opportunity before us to enact fair, comprehensive immigration reform. It is time for bipartisan action. So I join with Senators from both sides of the aisle to call for comprehensive immigration reform, and I will work to enact it. We have to put aside the mean-spiritedness and shortsighted policies driven by fear and recognize the dignity of those whose work contributes to reinvigorating America. Consistent with our heritage as a nation of immigrants, we need to bring people out of the shadows. My maternal grandparents were immigrants to this country. My wife's parents came as immigrants to this country. We are a nation of immigrants. And those of us who are here now should not think that somehow we got here differently, and that we should close the doors to the rest. That is not the American way.

Through comprehensive immigration reform, we can increase the opportuni-

ties for American businesses to obtain the workers they need while ensuring that priority is given to willing workers already in this country, from dairy farms in Vermont to multinational corporations. We have been told of the plight of the American farmers from New York to California. We have seen the pictures of the piles of rotting fruit that have gone unharvested. We hear American technology companies lamenting lost opportunities and the loss of skilled innovators to other countries. Dairy farmers are yearning for more available legal workers in my own State of Vermont. But worse yet, others have watched families in their employ be torn apart through piecemeal, inconsistent, sometimes heavy-handed enforcement efforts. I have met some of those families. I have talked to people who were fifth, sixth, seventh generation Vermonters who say how unfair it is to see these good families torn apart by seemingly arbitrary immigration enforcement efforts. No American farmer, no business, should be put in the position of having to choose between obeying the law or losing their livelihood.

Where American workers can fill available jobs, of course they should be given priority. But where these jobs are available but unclaimed by American citizens, it makes no sense to deny willing foreign workers the opportunity to work. We can strike a balance if we work together.

We must streamline and reform our visa system for low-skilled workers so we can help reduce the crippling backlogs that affect American businesses. And we must increase the number of low-skilled work visas issued each year to keep up with the needs of our economy. We should enact stronger, consistent employer verification procedures. We should impose penalties for those employers who flout the law and exploit those who have no voice. We can do this by working together and enacting comprehensive reform.

Through comprehensive and smart reforms we can increase our security. Let us work to focus enforcement efforts and protect our citizens from those who seek to do us harm. Let us put an end to the enforcement conditions that end in too many needless deaths in the deserts of the Southwest, families—spouses and children—who die needlessly trying to seek the promise of America. We also have to take a smart approach in dealing with the millions of people already here, one that does not divide families and make instant criminals out of millions of people but rather honors our Nation's best traditions. When we enact reforms to bring the millions of undocumented people of this country out of the shadows, greater accountability will follow. When we provide incentives for undocumented people to enter a path to citizenship, we will encourage them to live up to our traditions of citizenship and civic responsibility. When we endow those who seek to better their lives and